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REMARKS

Regarding the Amendment

Claim 1 has been amended to further point out and distinctly claim what the applicants regard as their invention. As amended, claim 1 now specifies that (1) the polyurethane dispersion is "externally stabilized"; (2) the polyurethane does not contain ionic or nonionic hydrophilic groups and (3) the polyurethane dispersion is not mixed with another dispersion or emulsion. Support for these additional features is found in the specification at page 5 lines 32-35 and at page 8 lines 25-27.

Claim 7 has now been canceled in view of the amendment to claim 1, and conforming amendments have been made to claim 12.

Claims 28-43 have also been canceled without prejudice as being drawn to non-elected subject matter.

Regarding claims 11-14

As noted in the last response, these claims have been indicated as being rejected, but the office action does not state any rationale for their rejection.

Regarding the art rejections

The examiner continues to reject claims 1-3, 5-6, 8-10 and 15-17 using Spek (U. S. Patent No. 4,833,173) as the primary reference, together with various secondary references. (As mentioned above, the office action does not apply these references to claims 11-14, and so the basis for rejection of these claims is not known.)

As discussed in the last response, Spek describes two types of polymer latex, each of which is coagulated in a particular manner. The first type of polymer latex described by Spek is heat coagulable, and has a heat-coagulant built into the polymer chain. These are coagulated by application of heat. The second type of polymer latex described by Spek is coagulable through the addition of an electrolyte. This type of polymer has "highly anionic or highly cationic" character, as described at column 4 lines 43-47. As discussed in the previous response, neither of these approaches is the same as the method set forth in claim 1.

However, in the Advisory Action mailed March 21, the examiner has now pointed to Spek column 6 lines 62-63, where he states: "[a]ccording to the invention, the combination of both above-mentioned embodiments yields good results".

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Because each of the "above-mentioned embodiments" includes both a specific type of dispersion coupled with a specific type of coagulation method, what Spek seems to mean by this statement is that both types of dispersions could be used, in conjunction with both types of coagulation methods. The quoted statement cannot fairly be interpreted as meaning that either coagulation method can be used with either type of dispersion—that would contradict Spek's earlier (and quite specific) teachings regarding the way that the two types of dispersions are to be coagulated.

In any event, the amended claims now clearly differentiate from (1) each of Spek's embodiments individually and (2) the combination of those embodiments. Present claim 1 now explicitly excludes the presence of an ionic polyurethane (or other ionic polymer). In that way, it does not read on any combination of Spek's two coagulation methods.

The examiner's reliance on Kukkala continues to be misplaced. Present claim 1 is to an impregnation method that includes a coagulation step. There is nothing in Kukkala that speaks to any method for coagulating a polymer dispersion. Kukkala is focused solely on the manner in which certain polymer dispersions can be made, not with the manner in which they might be coagulated.

It is further noted that the present amendments to the claims make Kukkala even less relevant than before. Kukkala deals with dispersions containing a polyurethane and another polymer. These dispersions are excluded from the claims as now written.

As for the other references, Hoersch is cited only for its teaching of applying a foamed dispersion to a substrate to make synthetic suede leather. It does not teach any method of coagulating any type of polymer dispersion using a multivalent cation neutral salt. Therefore, the addition of this reference does not cure the deficiencies of Spek and Kukkala.

Shkapenko deals with polyurethanes that are cast from solvents, and provides no information that pertains to methods of coagulating dispersions.

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Summary

For the reasons discussed above, the invention defined by claims 1-3, 5-6 and 8-17 is believed to be patentable over the references of record. A Notice of Allowance is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,
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